

HARP IN HAND



MYRA SCOVEL.
115 West William Street
Bath, New York

With very special love to
two of the most wonderful
people on earth,

HARP IN HAND



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115 West William Street
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1952

Sincerely -
Myra.

For F. G. S.

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FOREWORD

These verses were written during twenty years on the Mission field in China; in a Japanese internment camp, during the pressure of living under Communism, and at home in this wonderful country on furloughs. They are sent out, imperfect as they are, and perhaps because they are imperfect, in the hope that someone with a greater gift may be inspired by their very imperfection to become a better listener to the Voice of all beauty and inspiration. For Goethe has said, 'Men are only creative in art and poetry when they are religious; without religion, they are only imitative, lacking in originality.'

M. S. S.

Bath, New York

July 15, 1952.

HARP IN HAND

They hung their harps on the willow trees,
And sighed as the lone trees sighed.
There were songs to be sung in Babylon,
But their melodies had died.

God, there are songs to be sung today.
Help me to understand
That only from You can courage come.
Keep the harp tuned in my hand!

"I WILL BE WITH YOU."

"AND ALL THE TIME I WILL BE WITH YOU."

Have you ever thought what it would be like
To walk along that Galilean road,
With the satiny dust
Sifting through your sandaled toes, —
Feeling the strength of the Man beside you,
Discerning the vigor of His friendship?

You'd do anything in the world
For that Man,
Walk the whole length of any road
And count it a privilege,
Dare to start out on any adventure,
Knowing that you had His solemn promise
To go with you to the end.

EASTER MEMORIES

The altar with its cross of shining gold,
The pure, clean linen, smoothed of every fold,
Candles, flickering with a cozy light,
Upon the lilies, standing cool and white.

Sun, through jeweled windows, slim and tall,
Splashing holy rainbows on the wall.
For every child, a potted daffodil,
In every heart, a precious, glowing thrill.

"STONE WALLS, . . ."

"Dear God," I cried,
Before the gates clanged shut,
"However small my cell may be,
Grant that its window
Frame a tree."

God, who am I
That You should give
Such bounty in reply,
Pink ecstacy along a bough,
Spring against sky!

“DRINK YE ALL”

Drink all your cup of pain.
You cannot hope to miss its bitter taste.
The cup is there and you must drink,
So take it down in one deep draught
And learn
That pain has left a sweetness in its dregs
You had not dreamed to find.

Drink all your cup of joy,
And do not be afraid to taste each drop,
Lingering on the fragrance as you sip.
Oh do not push the cup away and say,
“This is too good to be.”
Joy is the great Divine Intent!
Drink all of it.

TO A FRIEND, BEREAVED

I cannot reach a hand to touch your sorrow.
I sit alone this fading afternoon,
Wishing I could tell you that tomorrow
Spring would come. Instead the winter moon
May slowly mist with ice the grief you are bearing,
And Autumn will have gone her way too soon.
If I could take the fire she is wearing,
If I could take the splendor of her gold,
Or know the quiet courage of her daring
To flaunt her leaves, so soon to turn to mould,
How clearly you would see her allegory!
My heart so longs to say to you, "Behold,
The valiant trees flash through the hills their story.
Beloved, they go out aflame with glory!"

“THESE LIFT MY HEART”

THESE LIFT MY HEART

These lift my heart to devotion;
Clouds piling white in the sky,
Silver gulls, —
The face of a child asking, "Why?"
Swallows, liquid in motion,
Midsummer murmuring bees,
God, here!
Humbly I fall to my knees.

“THE HEAVENS DECLARE THE GLORY OF GOD”

All night the holy mass is said
In the cathedral of the sky,
Music of wind through stringed lutes
Sweeps round the arching dome.
Deep calleth unto deep
In vast antiphonal.

At last, the solemn, hushed Amens
Reverberate away,
And Dawn, the altar boy,
Moves softly in,
Snuffing the glowing candles
Of the night.

RENEWAL

There is no need to prove oneself
Before a field of clover;
By sun and wind the mask is stripped
From off the striving face.

Lift up the head, lean against sky,
Laugh at the cliffs with exultant cry.
Renewal here
In this curve of road.
In a tree,
What therapy!

LAY BROTHER

A monk who is only making shoes?
But I thought you were priests who prayed.
Do you spend your hours at a cobbler's bench
And not on your knees in prayer?

His laugh struck across the cobbler's bench
Like a shower of meteors.
I am making shoes for God," he said,
"These shoes are for the Lord!"

"LIGHTING PRECIOUS CANDLES"

LIGHTING PRECIOUS CANDLES

*"All the darkness in the world cannot put out the light
of one small candle"*

In this still hour,
God holds his Great Lamp low
That I may light my prayers.

Shining through the world they go,
One here, one there, —
No "curtain" can keep out their glow,
No heart so cold
It cannot feel their loving warmth.
The world is being changed tonight.

Lit at the lamp of God,
In this still hour,
Prayer
Is lighting precious candles
Everywhere.

THREE PEOPLE REMEMBER

I. PETER

That night He said to me
Across the snarling lake,
"Come."
And I started out
Never dreaming that I might not make it.
There He stood, smiling a bit,
As He so often did,
And I smiled back, and walked along that lake
As if it were a country road,
Or just a trifle damper.
As long as I kept my eyes on Him
It was fun.
But for some fool reason,
I started looking down instead of up.
Panic? That's a small word
When you find yourself in the midst
Of a howling sea!
"What am I doing here?" I wanted to know.
"This just can't be! Nobody ever did this before!"
And I began to sink.

2. THOMAS

We were all together in the room that night,
And to say that I was skeptical of those wild tales
Is putting it rather mildly.
Yet, before I could bring out the scientific data
To support my views,
There He stood, smiling across at me.
"Thomas," He said, "Come here and feel my hands.
Now, put your fingers in my side."
With all the training I had had,
I knew at once
That His were human scars.

He seemed to realize my inner thoughts,
Because He said,
"Happy are they who have not seen,
Yet have believed."
Happy! Of course they were happy!
I would have given everything I owned
To have been as gullible as John was.
But I couldn't,
And He understood.
He knew that there are those of us
Who have to see to know.

3. A GALILEAN

I remember well that afternoon
Outside Bethsaida.
The backs of the leaves had turned to gold,
And we suddenly knew we were hungry.
All day we had been listening,
And lingered still,
Hating to leave Him lest we miss one word,
But night was coming on.

"Sit down, just where you are,
In groups of fifty,"
We heard Andrew say,
So down we sat,
And wondered what was coming next.

To every group the men were bringing
Bits of broken bread and fish.
Hardly enough for one man's meal,
And yet they passed it out.
I heard a woman say,
"But here, I have my basket full of cheese.
I started out to market it today,
And now the sun will soon be down.
So, neighbor, won't you have a bit?
And you, — and you?"

My hand went to my pocket
For the sack of dates
I'd meant to munch upon.
I never was a hand to make friends quickly,
But I passed around my dates.

Before we knew it
We had made a meal.
One villager had loaves of bread,
Another had some salted fish,
And from his cart a man brought skins of wine.
It was a happy feast, you may be sure.
Though we had never met before,
The fifty of us chatted like old friends.
There was a man who'd known my brother's wife,
And there it was I met young John, the Lame.
All of us had plenty and to spare.

So, friend, I cannot tell you now
Which was the greater miracle —
That five small loaves and two small fish
Were cut in pieces large enough
To feed a multitude,
Or that men's hearts were touched
To share the bit they had,
A miracle in either case, my friend.

"IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME"

He might have chosen monuments of stone,
Instead, He chose the simple bread and wine,
That there might be a memory of Him
In every little home in Palestine.

"Do this, remembering Me," He told the Twelve,
And they remembered how He loved them all,
Remembered how He smiled, and how His hand
Had trembled as it touched the dead boy's pall.

Remembered all the intimate details,
His way of speech, His quick, assenting nod;
Remembered all the awe of death and life,
And that their Friend was God.

And so we make no lengthy pilgrimage
To marble shrines, upon some peak above,
But breaking bread, and drinking simple wine,
Do this — remembering all His love.

A LITTLE GROUP OF THANK YOU PRAYERS
FOR WOMEN

1.

O God, I thank Thee for the special things
About this home,
The beauty which I never dreamed I'd have;
That sweep of snow,
Black pines against the sky,
The branch outside the window
Where the birds so love to sing,
And the glory of the sunset
Across our evening meal.

2.

I want to thank Thee, Father,
For the fragrances of home;
The spiciness of gingerbread,
The sunny smell of clothes just off the line,
The children's hair
Clean from fresh shampooing,
The coziness of moth balls
As the winter clothes
Are taken from their trunks.

And let me not forget
Spring coming in the window
As I make the beds,
Nor the heavenly fragrance
Of the baby's neck.

3.

Dear God, what could be sweeter
Than this pile of baby clothes!
Cream wooly shirts like golden fleece,
Soft muslins edged with shells of lace,
Pink sweaters with their bonnets
Round, to frame a baby face.
The finely woven blankets
That are meant for cuddling,
And Grandma's cashmere double gown
All feather-stitched with love.

4.

God, I am thinking of the tired, tired women
Around the world today;
Women who are bearing burdens
Too hard for anyone to bear,
Who set their hearts like flint,
And go on.
Women who are tired, and do not need to be tired,
Because they are worn out
From doing the wrong things,
And women who are exhausted
Because there is nothing for them to do.

God, I thank Thee
That Thou art rest.

WHAT DO THEY DO?

What do they do
On blissful days like this,
These poor who have no God?

When Autumn sets a torch to every tree,
When ecstacy
Would all but burst the heart,
What do they do
With no one to say thank you to!

"THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD HAS COME"

CHRISTMAS AT MING SUM SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND

Little blind angels in "heaven,"
Little blind shepherds below,
Singing of Bethlehem's Baby,
Leading each other they go.

Little blind Mary, adoring,
Joseph with downcast mien,
Crimson-robed wise men presenting
Gifts which they never have seen.

Satin-clad fairies of Christmas,
Elves, and the cherub who sings,
Shifting the while on his shoulders,
Heavy uncomfortable wings.

Little blind flutist apiping
Softly, while blind angels hum —
O dear little blind beloveds,
The Light of the World has come!

PRAYER JUBILANT

Father, I must speak to You
In some secluded place tonight.
Shut me in quietly with You alone.
I cannot step out
Into the vastness of this bounty,
And I dare not face
The goodness You have given.
Shut me in quietly with You alone,
And give me strength to meet
The joy, the joy, the joy!

TO A FRIEND WHO PRAYS

For E. McK. W.

I walked home with a lighter tread,
The troubled clouds had somehow fled,
The burden lightened, for you'd said
 You'd pray.

When in pain's deep pit I lay,
Even there a shining ray
Pierced the dark. I'd heard you say
 You'd pray.

When joy welled within my heart
With a sudden, quickening start,
Then I knew you'd gone apart
 To pray.

Some will praise you for your creed,
Some for every loving deed.
I can't forget that in my need
 You prayed.

"PRAY WITHOUT CEASING"

He said, "There is no need to pray thus
every day.

When life's decisions come, I'll know
and pray."

But while he fretted over what he called
delay,

His greatest moment came,
and slipped away.

UNANSWERED PRAYER

Mary and Martha, with confidence, sealed the note.
"He whom Thou lovest, Lord, is ill," they said.
Eagerly then, they watched the dusty road,
Knowing beyond a doubt that He would come.
But their brother died.

Paul, in prison, in shipwreck, facing the mob,
Fighting through all, a persistent thorn in the flesh,
Prayed from his soul that the hindrance be removed,
Leaving him free, unhampered, to do God's work.
But the thorn remained.

Christ, alone in the garden, on His knees,
Prayed in an agony, sweating great drops of blood,
Begged that His Father take the cup away,
Lest evil appear triumphant over good.
But He died on a cross.

Unanswered prayer? With Lazarus raised from the dead?
With the gospel preached by Paul to the ends of earth,
With the tomb's cold stone forever rolled away,
And the whole mad world with the gift of eternal life?